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SUBJECT: ARMENIA: PRESIDENT SARGSIAN DEFENDS

TURKEY-ARMENIA DEAL, DOWNPLAYS EARLY BREAKTHROUGH ON N-K

(SBU) Sensitive but unclassified)VUWN0`gic
importance of Armenia's relationship with Russia, lauded
constructive role of the U.S. in
Armenia-Turkey rapprochement, and downplayed the possibility
for a near-term
resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. END SUMMARY.

RUSSIAN-ARMENIAN "STRATEGIC" PARTNERSHIP

¶2. Sargsian opened his remarks with a reference to the
ongoing importance of the
Armenian-Russian strategic partnership, which he said is
based on economic cooperation, joint
participation in the Collective Security Treaty Organization
(CSTO), and the large
Armenian diaspora in Russia. Sargsian also highlighted the
help Armenia received from Russia
in the form of a \$500 million USD loan that helped to
mitigate the effects of the economic
crisis.

U.S.- ARMENIA RELATIONS

¶3. Sargsian painted a positive picture of the bilateral
relationship with the U.S., citing
economic, security, and democracy projects as areas of
continued close cooperation. Sargsian
emphasized the important role played by the Armenian Diaspora
in ensuring that the U.S.
Congress continued to support the country with development
assistance. Sargsian also made
positive remarks about the U.S. Government's constructive
involvement in Armenia-Turkey
rapprochement and dismissed critics' claims that the talks
had prevented the U.S. President
from publicly acknowledging the Armenian Genocide.

NAGORNO-KARABAKH PEACE PROCESS

¶4. Sargsian went to lengths to assure the MFA and his wider
audience that his government was
conducting all negotiations on the N-K peace process in a
transparent and open manner.
Rather defensively, Sargsian stated that his government had
not failed to inform
the public on its intentions vis-a-vis the Madrid Principles,
and that publication of the
principles proved that he had never tried to mislead the
public. He acknowledged that the
Madrid Principles had certain weak points, but pointed out
that the central issue of N-K
self-determination was preserved. Taking a stab at the
political opposition, Sargsian noted
that N-K's final status was a "sacred issue", and described

the efforts of those who would stop the process as nothing more than "petty profiteering".

¶5. Sargsian downplayed the possibility of a short-term breakthrough on N-K, assuring his listeners that the N-K peace process was a lengthy one that would require "more than a matter of days, weeks, or even months" to resolve. Sargsian stated that current negotiations only covered the basic principles of a settlement. Agreement on these basic principles would be followed by further negotiation on complex individual principles. During the negotiation process, Sargsian noted, it was Armenia's priority to ensure N-K's security while being its advocate to the international community.

NORMALIZING TURKISH-ARMENIAN RELATIONS

¶6. Sargsian referred to the Armenia-Turkey joint-statement of August 31 as a sign of the success of his decision to invite the Turkish President to Armenia the previous year, and his policy to pursue normalized relations. He stated that the protocols on the establishment of diplomatic relations and development of

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bilateral relations demonstrated that Armenia's interests would be protected in three vital ways:

- 1) Negotiations with Turkey and agreement on establishing relations have no preconditions related to the peaceful settlement of N-K;
- 2) Historical issues related to the Genocide will not be discussed by historians but rather within one of the subcommissions of the intergovernmental commission; and
- 3) A hearty and vigorous public debate within Armenia will precede the signing of these important agreements.

¶7. Sargsian closed his speech with a reminder to senior diplomats about the importance of their work for Armenia's national security. Sargsian also noted that since becoming president he had made 10 ambassadorial appointments, of which only two had been political appointees. He pointed to this as a sign of his commitment to the Armenian Dipcorps and his trust in their professional judgment.

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